

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 930

By Akbari

A RESOLUTION to urge the State of Tennessee and its Department of Labor and Workforce Development to fully enforce existing state laws that require equity in pay without regard to gender.

WHEREAS, women make up more than half of the population in Tennessee, and they make up about fifty percent of the labor force in this nation, making it clear that women's wages and earnings have a tremendous impact on the economy of this State and the nation; and

WHEREAS, despite national and state legislation, lawsuits, and the general acceptance of women in many traditionally male-dominated fields, gender discrimination still exists and has a significantly negative effect on the overall economy of Tennessee and this nation; and

WHEREAS, a statistical analysis of Tennessee wage data demonstrates that when men and women at the same level of education are compared, the wage gap persists; and

WHEREAS, when the earnings of men and women in the same occupational fields are analyzed, it is clear that jobs held by women are heavily segregated into three of eight broad occupational categories, and the jobs in those three categories pay less; and

WHEREAS, women comprise between eighty to ninety-seven percent of the workers in the following occupations, which are historically low paying jobs: secretaries and administrative assistants, cashiers, elementary and middle school teachers, registered nurses, bookkeeping and accounting/auditing clerks, nursing, psychiatric and home health aides, child care workers, and office clerks; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee women have a sizeable presence in the State's workforce, yet their wages and earnings are diminished due to gender-based wage discrimination, resulting in

women having less money to spend on commodities and durable goods in the market place; the State, therefore, has diminished revenues through the loss of sales taxes; and

WHEREAS, social norms and familial roles, as they have evolved in our society, dictate occasions that pull women away from the work place for periods of time; the best examples of which are childbirth and childrearing, and long parental leave may lead to an actual or perceived deterioration in women's labor market skills. This perception does in fact contribute detrimentally to their workforce reentry opportunities, and additionally, women find themselves at a disadvantage later in life because of Social Security and pension payments that are based on earnings and time spent in the paid workforce; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee's pay differential, when assessed with statistics and studies utilizing national data, show that a large portion of the wage gap in Tennessee is attributable to the gender of the employee; and

WHEREAS, the reality of gender-based wage discrimination should not exist in Tennessee because such activity is expressly prohibited by the provisions of Tennessee Code Annotated Title 50, Chapter 2, Part 2; and

WHEREAS, while corporate integrity and equal human respect for both genders, coupled with respect for the laws of this State, should prompt and sustain self-policing by Tennessee employers and corporations, Tennessee's wage gap continues, and it is demonstrable; and

WHEREAS, whether the wage gap and the occupational segregation of women, and their resulting lower status, are due to discrimination by employers or due to socialization that affects their choices, or both, there is a pressing need to act to reduce the wage gap that exists and ameliorate any vestige of wage discrimination in this State; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby implore and encourage Governor Haslam and his employees in the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to increase the breadth and intensity of

enforcement strategies and actions across this State to ensure that all Tennesseans earn and receive wages fairly, equitably, and justly, without regard to gender.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Tennessee General Assembly will take under advisement the status of gender-based wage discrimination in the State at this time and give deliberative consideration to legislative initiatives to support the enforcement of existing wage fairness and anti-discrimination laws that are in force in Tennessee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an certified copies of this resolution be transmitted to Governor Haslam and the Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development.